

Follow That Boy by Puterboy1

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Summary: My own little crossover between pre-season 2 Stranger Things and and AU Super 8. Based on the plot of the 1985 film "Follow That Bird".

1. Prologue

The fall of 1983, forever locked in the strangest of things that happened in the everyday town of Hawkins, Indiana.

But what if those strange things continued to occur?

A whole year had come and gone since the night that saw the presumed demise of a Doctor Martin Brenner at the hands of a monster, miraculously surviving his attack. The US Department of Energy needed someone to continue Jane Ives' experiment tests, holding Project MKUltra in a secluded facility outside the similar town of Lilian, Ohio. They had only two contacts to the outside world, Jim Hopper and Lonnie Byers. The latter personally suggested his son, Will, who had gone through a long period of time in an alternate dimension known as the Upside Down.

The men who worked at the facility were concerned that somewhere in that dimension, he had obtained the same powers as Miss Ives and were concerned that they would contact with that power by bringing it to them.

But how?

2. Will

Summertime was always a pleasant season for the town of Hawkins, Indiana. The year was 1984 and computers were on the rise thanks to help of a company known as Apple. Hot dates bloomed and so did the sky as it cleared of spring rains and moody clouds. Kids ran around in their bicycles, racing and playing war games. A different kind of child had settled into their community not too long ago.

Will Byers was one of these bicyclists as he had more energy than all the other boys in town put together, including his friends. They were racing around the town square, waving hello and a happy wish to everyone they met, including some members of their families as they went on their way to do some shopping. Teenagers and other twelve year olds came to watch them racing around, being wary of all the trucks and cars that came to and fro, stopping at every moment they came in front of them. This only disgruntled the drivers.

Upon making his way to the movie theater, Will came across a young girl in pigtails, whom he had never seen before. Curious, he rolled up to her.

"Hey, little girl? Are you new around here."

The girl who appeared to be about six years old seemed shy, but she answered straight away.

"Yes, I'm waiting for my mommy to take me to see a movie. She's getting the tickets."

Will smiled his best, trying to earn her trust.

"What's your name?"

"Gertie."

"Well, Gertie, you are welcome to stay as long as you like."

Dustin Henderson, the heavy-set member of the quartet who had his front teeth removed, wheeled his bike quietly behind his two other friends, the odd Mike Wheeler and the dark-skinned Lucas Sinclair,

who were forming a gap.

"I'm going to win," he muttered quietly.

But his thoughts of victory had diverted him straight into a trash can that frightened Will, but intended no harm as memories of the Upside Down began to haunt him. His feet soon had a mind of their own and they pedaled his bike straight into a trashcan, falling over on it's left side and Will rolled twice away from the spilled trash. Thankfully, he did not bleed, but Troy Harrington and his friend James who had a nasty habit of treating Will and his friends as if they were sideshow attractions, no, *subhumans*, laughed while some of the citizens nearby just watched. They could have helped him up, but they were certain that Will was able to support himself.

"Nice work, loser," came the not-so-nice voice of Troy.

Will heard him and fought back verbally.

"Call me that again and I swear to God that will kick your sorry a....ssssssssssssssss."

He was surprised to see his own father Lonnie standing above him like some guardian angel. The visits his father made to the family were scarce even after he returned.

"Are you all right, son?" he said kindly above the hissing. "You didn't break your crown or anything, did you?"

"No."

Will shook his head, he was more concerned that his father was standing right in front of him. And without his girlfriend Cynthia as well.

"Will," his father said at last. "I wanted to talk to you about something that concerns your education."

"My education? Out of all the kids in this neighborhood?"

"I'll take you home, we can discuss this with your mother."

Will's mother Joyce and his older brother Jonathan were just about as surprised as Will himself seven minutes earlier when he came into the house. Both parents were seated at the dinner table while the boys sat on the couch where black letters and colorful lights once hung above and had long since vanished since November.

"You know, Joyce. I think all that time in wherever it was he disappeared to must have rattled his brain."

"It's not exactly rattled, Lon. He's recovered pretty fast, both mentally and physically."

"But what about his intelligence? I know you think that I might not have thought of that before, but I think being in that place has had a unique effect on him."

Will felt like cringing into his soul. The Upside Down did have a unique effect on him, for he could remember the night he went to the bathroom and coughed up a slug into the sink.

"There's this town called Lillian, which is in Ohio," Lonnie continued. "And they've got a wonderful school and with us being divorced and all I was wondering that if I took Will off your hands, it will make life easier for the both of us, especially since Johnny's now a man."

"I guess so," sighed Joyce, who felt like there was no hate in her heart anymore. "But how much will it cost?"

"Not a single penny," Lonnie reassured her. "It's free. Save it for when Johnny goes to college."

"Look's like Dad has finally softened up," the older brother said to the younger.

But Will was thinking about something else.

"What do I tell my friends?"

"The truth."

"What about my school? Principle Coleman, Mr. Clarke...."

"They'll get the message. I just hope Dad will give you enough time to do all that."

But Jonathan soon realized that he spoke too when his father said.

"Will, start packing."

Will faced him with an uneasy expression.

"Right now?"

"Sure," his father relaxed his arms. "We've got a train to catch."

Without further ado, Will rushed to his room without even realizing his legs were going that fast and packed five shirts in red, tan, chartreuse, verdigris and almond, three jeans in black, white and blue, a toothbrush and two books, Marvel Super Heroes Secret Wars #1 which he had just purchased from the school's book fair last month and *Alien* by Alan Dean Foster. Will also took his backpack which was already filled with his school supplies. He did not even think that was he going to stay for too long, and even so, he had packed only a few necessities in not to keep his father waiting. He was certain that Jonathan or his mother would send more of his things once he was settled in. And speaking of his mother and brother, they were standing outside waiting to see him off.

"Are you sure you want to go with him?" Joyce asked. "You don't have to."

"Mom's right," Jonathan added. "We're all the family you have. Dad doesn't really count."

"He is still my father, no matter what," said Will. "And he's not doing anything wrong this time, he actually cares for my education."

The horn of Lonnie's 1972 Oldsmobile 442 blasted along with a shout.

"Will! It's time!"

Joyce and Jonathan each gave Will a big hug and spoke again.

"Don't forget to write."

"I won't, Mom."

"And don't forget to read since you're going a special school."

"I won't forget that, Jonathan."

And he rushed over to his father's car and went around to the front passenger seat all without looking back.

"Can't I at least say goodbye to my friends first?"

But his father slammed his right foot down on the gas pedal without another word. Jonathan and Joyce were sorry to see him go and when they told the news, everyone including Troy and Jennifer Hayes, a girl whom Will had romantic feelings for, was very silent all throughout the day.

3. The Lab

The train ride to Lillian felt short to Will, but to everyone else it was long and boring. At their arrival in Lillian, Lonnie and Will were met by a black Lincoln limousine with a man in a silver suit who also bore a friendly smile that may or may not have felt genuine.

"You must be Mr. Dylan."

"Indeed, young man. I'll be your new science teacher for the time being."

"New science teacher?"

Will knew that he would have to get used to him. Mr. Clarke, one of his now-former teachers from Hawkins Elementary, had a personality that was warm and this man seemed to be the polar opposite: a cold one.

Uneasy with this total stranger, he set his right foot into the rear right side entrance into the Lincoln and took the opposite side while his father took the former. With a slight jolt, the car was off and about away from the town to the secluded area with a large white complex that was about five hundred feet long and three stories high. Who could imagine that such a school would look so much like the Hawkins Department of Energy back home?

But once he was inside, the white walls, the white floor and the white light brought back memories of the hospital he had woken up from and his mind was delaying his eyesight, preventing himself from realizing that they had walked further into the building until they came upon a man in dark blue with white hair.

"Hello, Will."

Looking up at the man's friendly smile that had a venomous tip, Will's mouth went dry. The familiarity of this man was starting to hit him harder than a rock pounding a steel boiler when he introduced himself.

"I am Dr. Brenner, head of the Department of Energy."

Three minutes later in quiet room often used for interrogation complete with two chairs, a table and a widescreen mirror. They were face to face, right in the middle of a discussion.

"So, you're the bad man Eleven and my friends told me about."

"Yes, but the monster left me with a few scars that could be easily cured by plastic surgery. When I heard that she battled this Demogorgon and was never seen, I thought all my hard work was lost."

"What she needed," Will said. "Was a *childhood*, not these experiments."

"True, but I hope to redeem myself by making you more comfortable than Eleven ever was. You have my word. But speaking of Eleven..."

His voice was starting to sound dark.

"I have deduced that all that time in the Upside Down has left you unstable. Could you tell me if you suffered any side-effects."

Will lowered his head in the most dreadful confession he could think of.

"Well, I did throw up a slug one Christmas Eve dinner...in the bathroom of course. Dad must have figured it out for himself when he told Mom that there was something wrong with me during my time there."

"He read our statistics," Brenner stated. "But I think the problem, Will, is that as a side effect of your visit into the unknown. You might have Eleven's powers."

"ME?!"

Will's pupils went small as his adrenaline began to pump at an alarming rate.

"Her connection in her effort to find you combined her possibly now

current presence in the Upside-Down has merely copied her powers into your body as a result of your unstable condition. But in order to prove this, I may have to do some experiments...the same ones I did on her."

Will wasn't sure if they would hurt or anything, but he gave in all the same.

And so it was arraigned.

The next morning after a warm breakfast of Eggos waffles (personally suggested by Will) Will's head was wired to a machine. He was sitting down in front of a table that had nothing on it save for a single can of Coca-Cola. Close to the table on the other side was a camera and Lonnie and Brenner, flanked by a duet of male scientists in white coats looking him over. Brenner peered his body forward, remembering how he had once performed this experiment on a hesitant Eleven.

After being instructed to crush the can, Will did not realize that he was in the same position as Eleven one year ago. His eyes were squinting at the can wishing for it to at least be dented. The beeping grew intense, the seismometer began to draw smaller impulses and finally, the can collapsed on the inside and the coke contained inside it began squirt on his face and the window. Some of it even spilled on the machine, but thankfully the power was cut off before the liquid could shorten the circuits.

Other than that, it was a true success.

The next day, Brenner decided to get Will in shape, he placed a VHS tape of a workout video onto a television monitor and as the exercises commenced. For the next two days he was swim in a tank to see how long he could hold his breath (which Will thought seemed rhetorical) and for the following night, they checked his body to see what type of power he had while he was sleeping, trying hard not to wake him up.

Then, about three days later, a more rigorous test was involved: a sensory depravity tank.

Will woke up in darkness while his physical body was in a suit to protect him from the water. He was looking all around for something that would involve an inner connection. He turned for thirty seconds then found a figure that seemed to be standing about a mile away from him. Slowly he walked, not sure if the figure was dangerous or harmless. As the figure grew larger, Will could make out the details:

A blue jacket, white shoes, a pink frilly dress and short black hair.

The figure turned and it was...

Eleven.

"Who are you?" she asked.

"I was going to ask you the same question," Will said. "Are you the girl my friends talked about."

"Yes."

The girl's voice sounded sad. Will tried to be sympathetic.

"Where are you?"

"A place that you have seen before."

That was all Eleven said, for Will had now found himself back in the real world, his eyes starting out at his audience with uncontrollable feelings of destruction all around the room that gave Brenner déjà vu when he subjected the girl to sensory deprivation in the past. The men quickly removed Will from the tank and his heavy breathing only confirmed that the boy had enough. He had also gathered the courage to shout.

"Powerful or not, I won't stay here!"

And he ran off to his room as quick as a bunny, locking the door with new powers as soon as he got in.

Later that night, after donning his street clothes, Will began to understand why Eleven hated her life with Brenner and the other scientists so much. He decided that the time had come to go back

home even if Brenner was completely against the idea. As soon as he had somehow sensed that Brenner, his dad and all the other scientists were asleep, he grabbed his backpack and suitcase and walked quietly out of the room on gentle feet.

His escape was done so easily.

First, he came to the door where he recognized as the one he had entered with Dad on the day he first came here, then his powers shut off the electricity, preventing an alarm from going off as he lifted the garage door, then after making his way through the unlocked fence, Will disappeared into the night.

About an hour after his escape back home in Hawkins, Joyce was sitting down to a lonely dinner of asparagus and baked potato chips. She was sitting in front of the TV, watching *Cannonball Run*, when came the sound of the phone and she rushed right over to answer it.

"Hello?"

"Hey, Joyce," came the voice of her ex-husband in a disgruntled tone.

"What do you want now, Lonnie? I was in the middle of watching *Cannonball Run*."

"Will's escaped?"

Joyce's eyes went wide, but seemed to her like a risk cure. Her tone of voiced pretended to sound worried.

"For what reason?"

"I'll give you one guess."

"He's coming back here."

"Yes, we at the Department of Energy have ways finding test subjects that should be seen and not heard."

Joyce seemed to be familiar with that name, but she pressured Lonnie again.

"And what are you going to do about it?"

"I am going to find Will, wherever he is, bring him back and make sure that his ass stays there."

And he hung up at the same time Joyce did in a fit of rage.

"But not before we find him first," Joyce said to herself.

If she could find Will in an alternate dimension, she was willing to do it again. Without a further thought, she rushed over to Jonathan's room to wake him up with the exact intention that they were going find Will again, no matter the consequences.

4. The Search

The next morning after Joyce told everyone the news, the local colors of Hawkins began wondering what to do about the runaway boy who had made a more interesting case when he disappeared last year. Jonathan, Mike, Lucas, Dustin and other citizens who knew Will very well arrived at the police station to review the rescue plan to bring him home. Chief Hopper presented a black and white map of the United States, assisted by his secretary Florence and the elementary school's science teacher Scott Clarke. Among the people who were assigned for the search and rescue mission were Nancy's not-so-jerky boyfriend Steve Harrington. His friends Tommy H. and Carol also came to the station, mostly out of curiosity rather than courtesy. They had wised up after Will's return, but still acted like jerks (if you can count their seemingly harmless remarks).

"I should have seen this coming," moaned Dustin. "It's last year all over again."

"But this time, he's in the real world," Lucas added. "I mean, he couldn't have gone back to that place."

Mike was starting to cringe at the very mention of the Upside Down, his speedy recovery back to happiness having been disrupted. Not mention he was already starting miss someone else and wondered if *she* was still there too.

At last, Hopper addressed the townsfolk. Pointing a ball-point pen to Will's location, a mile off from where Lillian was marked.

"All right, we're here and Will is here heading west. Or so we think."

The others nodded before Hopper resumed.

"Jonathan, you and the kids will be taking I-70 in the Pinto."

Jonathan turned to Mike, Dustin and Lucas, who were mostly excited.

"I'd better get those walkie-talkies," said Lucas.

"And some snacks from your dad's kitchen so I don't have to pay

extra," added Dustin.

"I think you should take the bus," Jonathan argued. "Mom's car is not a bedroom if you catch my drift."

"I'm sure they'll be fine," sighed Joyce. "Will you boys?"

Her tone complete with the fixture of crossed arms was enough to make the boys nod their heads in submission. Hopper then pointed the ball-point pen to another route.

"Steve, you take the BMW onto I-74."

Steve nodded his head silently, keeping his mouth shut like a true gentleman.

"Nancy, you'd better stick with Steve."

"Okay," Nancy nodded her head.

"Looks like it's you and me, Nance." Steve smiled.

Nancy looked over to make sure Jonathan's face was not green with envy. Hopper's pen moved across to a third line.

"Mr. Clarke, your car, the Galaxie, will take Route 36 onto Route 42."

Then as Mr. Clarke smiled politely in response, Hopper circled the location of Lillian on the map: thirty-eight miles south of Akron with the city of Canton on the other side.

"You should be able to meet up with Will right around Lillian. He could be hiding in there. And if you haven't found him: phone home."

The room was silent for about five seconds until Hopper asked.

"Any questions?"

Tommy raised his right hand as high as he could. He thought he was back in school again when he made his answer.

"I'm doing a geography report before school starts and I've got one question: What is the capitol of South Dakota?"

"It's Pierre," Hopper replied disdainfully. "But that's not important right now."

The others, including Carol, facepalmed at his stupidity. But Steve, who had known the guy for quite a long time

"Tommy, Carol. If you don't want to go. You don't have to."

"Are you kidding?" Carol said in an excited tone that was starting sound genuine for once. "I love a wild goose chase! Let's say we explore the Midwest."

"No!" Steve along with everyone else chorused. "We have to find Will!"

The two former assholes begrudgingly gave in.

Officers Powell and Callahan were given the task of searching for Will via a crop-duster, a red colored biplane used for spreading insecticide on fields.

"You sure you know how to fly a plane?" asked Powell when they got to the airstrip.

"Sure," replied Callahan. "My dad flew in Korea. He even gave me an instruction book."

"Alright, but if we crash, we die with honor."

Not long after the officer had taken off, the three cars were lined up at the town square, bidding goodbye to their families. After the Hendersons and the Sinclairs, it was the Wheeler family's turn to bid the guys adieu.

"Take care of Holly for me," Mike called to his parents.

Dustin was soon munching down on the Cheetos he had taken from the kitchen.

"Save some for later, Dustin," Lucas said to him. "We haven't even started our trip yet."

Behind them was Steve's BMW.

"Isn't this exciting?" Carol fidgeted in the seat behind Steve, who was driving the car. "Going to see the mountains and the prairies and the whole rest of that song?"

"No, it's not," Nancy who was riding shotgun scolded her. "Now's the time to find Will."

Tommy who was sitting behind Nancy, was equipped with an air horn. He blew it in his right hand out the window.

"Thought it be good in case the horn got broken," he said once the three remaining passengers turned their heads at him in dismay.

Mr. Coleman offered himself a ride with Mr. Clarke, but his reply was.

"Don't forget you have a school to run. It may not be the school season now, but you still have time to prepare."

Principal Coleman gave his left hand a thumbs up and the cars proceeded on their way.

"Take care and good luck!" Joyce cried.

But it was apparent that the kids could not hear her anymore and she kept waving her arms like cheerleader until all three automobiles were out of sight.

"Now," she breathed once she was back inside the safety of her home. "I wonder where Will is now."

5. Lillian, Ohio

After walking for two hours alongside the road, Will finally came to a sign written in cursive:

"Lillian, Ohio

Population: 12,000"

"I just hope Dad and those bad men won't be able to find me there."

And he continued on to make sure he wasn't.

The town of Lillian was remarkable similar to back home, it had the usual red-bricked school close to a hill on top of it, a store selling 8-track players, Super-8, Super-16 film and all kinds of stuff, a steel mill used for construction materials, wide streets of diners, gun stores, bars, car lots, grocery stores, model shops, tackle shops and houses in the hills above him. The people around Will never paid him any mind except for a couple of curious glances, including those of a few boys that seemed to be around his age.

Finally, he came to a police station, where an officer in dark hair was just about to enter his squad car for the drive home. Will approached him.

"Officer, my name is Will Byers from Hawkins, Indiana. I just got out of a laboratory that I can't explain and I was wondering if you take me to your house so I can call home."

The officer, whose name was Jack Lamb, was too friendly with kids to report them in. He saw that the boy would make another good friend of his son, who was just about Will's age. He pointed his right thumb to the shotgun seat and said.

"I think you should just come home with me."

On I-70, in the green Pinto heading east, Jonathan had just turned on the radio. By chance, the song "Should I Stay Or Should I Go" by The Clash was playing.

"Did I ever tell you that Will and I used to listen to this song all the time?" asked Jonathan, drumming his fingers on the wheel to the beat of the song's tune.

"How ironic," muttered Dustin.

But Lucas heard him.

"You don't even know what ironic means."

"Sure I do, it's when something that is, but it really isn't."

"That doesn't make sense," said Mike, looking out the window.

The road was long, but soon they were in Jacksonburg for a refueling stop. Dustin wanted to get some Cheez Whiz nachos, but Jonathan feared he would get the cheese all over the upholstery and suggested waiting until nightfall where they would camp out by a warm fire with roasted marshmallows in addition.

Elsewhere on I-74, there was another tune being sung live as opposed to a radio. Steve was singing solo "*Rollin', rollin', rollin. Rawhiiiiiiiiide!*" at a sharp G-major sort of voice that could not carry a tune to save his life. His singing was so atonal that Nancy held her ears. Tommy and Carol covered their ears as well. The duo's eyes were squeezed shut before they opened them, gazing at each other. Perhaps driving after an hour had made him crazy, but it was Nancy who broke the silence and brought the song screeching to a halt.

"Steve, as much as I hate to interrupt your MTV concert, I was just wondering if were following the route Hopper had given us."

"I checked the signs, Nancy. They're all the same."

"Well I didn't think we would take a detour."

"A detour into Cincinatti won't hurt. Besides, we might have to stop there for the night. If not we just camp out in the woods, roughening it."

Carol leaned her head forward.

"If you had an RV instead of a BMW, we could have been roughening it in a hotel on wheels."

"The key to roughening it," Tommy said to her. "Is to learn how to survive without modern technology. I'm pretty sure Nancy learned it from Jonathan."

Nancy looked into the rearview mirror and blew a raspberry. Jonathan was much more than that. Then with a solemn face, she looked out the window and sighed slightly.

"Steve, where are we? I've completely lost track of the map. Maybe we should stop and ask for directions."

Steve checked the gas meter, it was close to empty.

"I think you're right, we need gas."

Luckily they were close to Greensburg, where a gas station was nearby. As Steve loaded the car with gas, Tommy and Carol went to buy some Budweiser for the ride. Nancy stayed in the car, determined to save her energy once they got to Lillian.

"I miss Barb," she moaned, smashed out of her gourd once they were on the road again. "There! I said it!"

Mr. Clarke, who had already passed Sulphur Springs on Route 36, thought of counting the seconds as a way of passing the time.

"I hope there won't be too much traffic when I get to Lillian," he said to himself. "There might be a film festival over in Cincinnati."

But Callahan and Powell were already ahead of them in the dust-cropper.

"You sure you can find Will from this altitude?" Powell shouted from the front seat.

Callahan, who had been scouring the ground with a pair of field glasses, had no need to answer his question. He could envision Will wearing a red jacket and was unmistakable by his hair. But they

would find out soon once they landed somewhere close to Lilian.

At the Lamb residence, which was a one-story house painted in white, Mr. Lamb and Will left the squad car into the door. Jack sent his voice into the further recesses of the house.

"Joseph! I found you a new friend!"

Joseph "Joe" Lamb was 13 years old, perhaps older if he was muscular and it looked as if he had been. He was roughly turned out in a silver t-shirt with black collars and navy blue Wrangler jeans. The number of toys and models he owned in his room looked more expensive than his clothes and in his own element, he looked sad on the inside, but he plucked up a smile when his eyes met Will's.

"This is Will Byers, he's on the run."

"On the run?" Joe cocked his head to the left.

"He might be a witness to a laboratory incident. By my guess, they may have conducted or at least tried to conduct some rigorous experiments or something on him."

"Something like that," Will confessed.

But then, Jack was prepared to leave for the door.

"Joe, I'll be back in a couple of hours. Make sure you stay with him, all right?"

Both boys nodded and Officer Lamb was out the door. As the sound of the car speeding off died away, Joe observed Will, who was setting down his backpack and suitcase, a long silence occurring between the two of them.

"So," Joe said at last. "You're a runaway?"

"Yes," Will answered. "I'm surprised your father even believed me when I told him I had come out of a laboratory."

"And what laboratory would that be?"

Will was fearful that the men who had tracked his location were listening in on their conversation, so he whispered into Will's right ear.

"The Department of Energy. They say I have powers I got from being in an ultimate dimension."

Joe was stunned by the open admission, but his face read skepticism.

"Watch this."

Will concentrated his eyes on an Avion bottle that was 3/4s empty and as before it was crushed on the inside and it collapsed, falling off the table into a nearby trashcan. Now Joe was looking at Will like a savage creature seeking vengeance onto his tormentors before that little boy façade seeped back into him.

"How did you do that?"

"Telekinesis. My friends told me about a girl who had powers similar to me but she just disappeared."

"What do you mean disappeared?"

"She was lost trying to fight off a creature who we called the Demogorgon, but I don't think she's dead. She spoke to me in my mind."

"Can you read my mind?" Joe asked curiously.

"Probably not, but I can sense someone like the Force."

"A great disturbance?"

"Maybe."

Then Joe began to sound perky and upbeat.

"Maybe I can take you to see my friends. They're probably at the diner getting lunch."

"What about the men looking for me?"

"No problem, you can just pull the hood over your jacket."

Will chuckled, it had not occurred to him before.

At the diner, Will sat with Joe on his left and on his right was a ravishingly beautiful girl with blond hair named Alice Dainard. She took two glances at Will before turning her eyes to Joe. Will seemed to be focused more on the appearances of Joe's friends.

Charles Kaznyk looked every bit like Dustin, but he was more chubbier, had flat hair and wore a bumblebee colored shirt instead of a cap. He seemed to capture Dustin's personality, but his passion was directing movies. Cary McCarthy was thin and had such lengthy blonde hair that anyone from a distance would have mistaken him for a girl. He was a pyromaniac who build his own explosives and he would have reminded Will of Lucas if he wasn't Caucasian. Martin Read, who wore glasses and had an IQ to fit his stereotypical nerd outlook reminded Will of Mike, along with Preston Scott who seemed to have black curly hair and didn't have a problem with anything.

After about five minutes, the others seemed intrigued by Will's story.

"You have just inspired me to make my newest project."

Charles held up his right hand, forming an invisible title in front of him.

"The Boy Who Came Back to Life."

"What about 'The Vanishing of Will Byers'?" added Preston, hoping for a more literal title. "The audience will want to know who the boy's name is."

"You heard what Will said," put in Cary. "He doesn't want to be found, so I think we should stick with Charles' title."

"You should talk," Martin exclaimed. "When your last movie about a road trip got us no audience, I want to call it, *The Empty Road*."

"I have no idea what you are saying," Charles pretended, putting the memory away into the deep caverns of his mind.

"Well, I say that next time we do a movie," chipped in Alice. "The admission fee should be ten cents."

Charles looked at her incredulously.

"That's the same price as cigars and cigarettes."

Before Chuck could even think about it, Will immediately said.

"I'll do it. But I'd rather do it indoors in case the bad men are looking for me."

"Good idea," said Joe, giving him the thumbs up.

Then they left the diner with Will getting home before Jack did.

Later that night, Jack bought Will a sleeping bag, the same kind the officers used for out-of-city travels. It was a dull green and it was starting to pale. Will did not mind after finding the interior of the blanket to be comfortable. Joe, already dressed for bed, spoke to Will from his bed.

"Comfy?"

"Yes. But I miss my friends, my Mom, my brother-"

"Glad you do, I miss my Mom, too."

"Miss her?"

Will was now curious. Joe told his story.

"It was four years ago in January. My Mom was a lovely woman who liked to helped people and I thought that hands-down she was the winner of all the mom's in this town...then one day she got beamed by a chunk of steel while working at the factory."

His voice began to turn somber, like something he did not want to say in a very long time.

"I cried for half-a-week. And I didn't think I'd be able to go through it."

Then Will noticed a bit of silver around his neck—expensive silver? When his right hand offered it, Joe showed Will the oval shaped necklace around his neck, opening it up to reveal a picture of his mother and himself as an infant.

"At least you still have your mother," Joe told him. "I don't think I'll be able to find another one with Dad being so busy and all at the station."

"Maybe you'll feel brighter in the morning once we do Charles' movie," Will reminded him.

This made Joe smile and with mixed thoughts of excitement and Will longing for home on their minds, the boys went to sleep, hoping for a better tomorrow. Will could only imagine what his mother and brother were thinking right now.

"They'll find me," he thought, closing his eyes.

But he reckoned without Lonnie and a trio of scientists driving through the dark streets in a van.

As Mr. Clarke had found a large tree to sleep the night in his car hiding from plain sight to avoid highway patrolmen, Jonathan, Mike, Dustin and Lucas were camping out on the right side of the road with sleeping bags of their own. Lucas and Dustin were playing cards and Mike was trying to listen to the radio for music, while Jonathan, sitting up with his legs covered by the sheets of his own sleeping blanket, was looking up at the moon, wondering.

"Where are now, Will? In some far off dimension like before or just some...far off place where Dad has you locked away in his own castle?"

"Why are you talking to the moon?"

Jonathan was back on Earth by the sound of Dustin's voice.

"How else can I talk to Will?" he said before going back to sleep.

The other kids remained awake until their eyes grew weak.

Back home at Hawkins, as Joyce was preparing for bed, she looked over at Will's room and began to wonder how to deal with her youngest son once he was off to college.

"I feel like I had just experienced empty nest syndrome too soon," was the last thing she said before going to sleep.

Meanwhile, over in Cincinnati, Steve had parked the BMW in front of a diner on Sycamore Street. The quartet had already checked into the Millennium Hotel and were now looking for a bite to eat. Something that would satisfy Tommy and Carol's motives of facing the true American culture in Ohio with its food.

"Joe's Diner on Sycamore," Nancy read the sign. "Steve, couldn't we get room service at the hotel?"

"We already had lunch at Blimpie, now it's my turn to pick for a dinner spot. But I promise you we'll get breakfast from the hotel before we leave in the morning."

"Okay, at least we can use the phone and call home. Come on guys."

They were about to leave the car, but Tommy and Carol seemed to stay put.

"No thank you," Tommy moaned. "I have had enough fast food to last me a life time."

"I really need to use the bathroom," Carol fidgeted and she shot off like a jackrabbit inside.

"You should have gone after we checked in," Steve scolded her.

"Well, I didn't think now was the best time," she added. "But I would not want to miss out on an awesome dining experience."

And so with Tommy still in the car, Steve and Nancy found their seats by the window sitting on opposite ends. They were both reading off their menus.

"Joe's Burger, Cleveland Style Polish Boy, Ground Vegetable Plate..."

Steve seemed to enjoy the menu, but Nancy was aghast at how fattening they were.

"Chicken with fries? Neon's Chicago Style Dawgs? Chili Nachos? I'm not sure if there's anything here I could eat."

The bell on the door ringing told Nancy that Carol had gone back inside the car after using the restroom. A male waiter in a white suit came to take their orders, holding a pen and notebook in his hands.

"Name your poison, we've got Shrimp & Grits, Jack Potts Cheddar Penne & Crab and Grilled Chicken Breast Sandwich."

The last food caught Nancy's attention.

"That sounds healthy, I'll have the sandwich."

"Make it a double for me," Steve quickly added.

"Two Grilled Chicken Breasted Sandwiches!" the waiter shouted over his right shoulder to the kitchen.

And he hurried off to attend the other patrons.

"So," Steve said at last. "Are you and Jonathan still on?"

"I think Jonathan would appreciate how great the food is here."

"But he's not here. For all I know, he and the kids could be out camping."

Steve really didn't know, but this, coincidentally, was true.

"Anyway," Nancy continued. "If you two wanted to fight, I suggest competing each other in a race. But don't take my words too literally. Perhaps we can practice."

Five seconds later their food arrived and Nancy took the first bite while Steve did the second. He made the first sip of his water, while she did the second. The loud chorus of slurping and chomping caught the attention of the other patrons, including Tommy and Carol who peeked their eyes through the window.

"Maybe we made a mistake, Tommy. Those sandwiches look delicious."

In the end it was Steve who won the competition, and Nancy could think of nothing but a stuffed tummy all the way back to the hotel.

6. The Hunt Continues

The very next morning, Will woke up to see that nothing had changed for the better. He was still in Joe's bedroom and he could see all the models that the boy had put together. Then he heard the whistling of a steam kettle going off, telling him that breakfast was ready.

"Morning!" sang Joe, lifting the waffles out of the toaster.

And before he could pour the syrup on it, Will was already scarfing it down the minute the dish was set down.

"You act like you have not eaten in days," Joe sat down before him.

"I know," said Will with his mouth mushing the waffle into tiny pieces. "But I guess it's a trait found in kids with superpowers."

"Anyway, Charles called and said he wants to work the film around your story. Calls it his own definition of method acting."

"Or making a story up from scratch...but as long as it's based around mine, you'll just end up making a documentary."

"About your life in the laboratory?"

"Something a lot more interesting."

When Joe and Will met the kids on the top of a hill overlooking the houses, Will explained the events of last year, some of the details frightening and intriguing some of the kids, including Charles.

"It sounds to me like you entered the Twilight Zone," Cary said at last.

"Something like that," Will tried to explain. "Mr. Clarke and my friends called it the Upside Down."

"Well, whatever," Charles had little time to believe the authenticity of Will's tall tale. "Just reflect back to the day you were captured and give me your best frightened face."

The Super 8 camera started rolling, operated by Martin and the rest of the gang watched Will looking all around for the mysterious monster that was now gone. Then his attention turned to a Chevrolet van coming at them from the right side of the road. Peering his eyes, he saw who the driver was and his face became more real than Charles ever saw in his life.

"It's my father!" he shouted. "And those men from the lab!"

Alice, having had a similar experience with a father of a colorful background, asked Will in quick haste.

"Is he anything like my father."

"It will be worse if we don't get of here!"

Will, Joe, Preston, Alice and Martin left to the southern direction of the road, but Charles instructed "Keep rolling!" to Cary who obeyed without questioning. Charles was certain that adding the men in the van to his movie would add production value, which he favored above anything else to make his films more interesting.

Dr. Brenner came out of the van's passenger seat and casually approached the two boys.

"Where did the boy in the brown hide off to?"

"He went that way!" said Cary pointing his right thumb over his back.

Charles feared that if the men got a hold of his film, destroying it or whatever they wanted to do with it, and said nothing, he just pointed his left thumb to the left side of the road.

"Is there any film in that camera?" asked Dr. Brenner out of the blue.

"No."

Brenner seemed to believe Charles' lie but now he was determined to get Will back in his hands. He and Lonnie left the van down the hill where they saw the children leave, with Charles and Cary following them at a quiet pace to prevent the two from getting suspicious, following their every move. The men checked the houses, most of

them empty while Will, Joe and the others hid in the house opposite of the one the duo were searching, a white two story home constructed of wood. Charles could have sworn he saw Joe and the others heading out of the house, anyway he kept filming.

He stopped when Brenner and Lonnie left the house and hid behind the door, waiting for the van to leave in order for them to rejoin the others.

Back home, Joyce went to visit Hopper and Flo at the police station to check on the rescue team's progress.

"Everybody seems to be getting closer to Lillian," Hop told her. "Powell and Callahan called me yesterday and said they'd get Will quicker than the others."

"I wonder where he is now."

Joyce's words were full of solemn and hope, she was putting her son's fate in the hands of a police chief since last year. She walked over to the map and stared at it, wishing she could have participated, but of course, work was calling her.

Speaking of which, Powell and Callahan had landed the dust cropper by an airstrip close to Lillian. Powell spoke through the radio in the cockpit, asking the control tower permission to land.

"Roger, you're clear to land."

That was all they heard yesterday from control and nothing else. The two officers then rented a motorbike with a sidecar and took off for Lillian.

"Will's got to be here somewhere," Callahan told his partner.

Meanwhile, Nancy, Steve, Tommy and Carol all had breakfast at the hotel, checked out and followed I-71 to a bridge in Columbus, which loomed over the Scioto River. Steve wanted to stop there to take souvenir photographs, even thinking of the view as a perfect spot where he and Nancy could cuddle up together.

"Beautiful view isn't it?"

But Nancy took one short glance at the river and turned back to Steve.

"Is that why you stopped the car?"

"Nance, I never promised you a rose garden. Think of it as like hovering over the ocean on a concrete piece of land."

"But we aren't anywhere near Lillian," whined Carol in the most mature way she could think of.

"That's the most genuinely intelligent thing I ever heard you say," Nancy said.

Then she turned to Steve and it was plain to see that he was starting to revert to his old jerky self.

"Move over, Steve, I'm driving."

Nancy's speech was so rapid that Steve pretended he had not heard.

"What?"

"You heard me," Nancy's voice went slower. "I said 'move over, I'm driving'."

Steve gave in and he and Nancy switched places.

"You know, you're pretty hot when you're angry," Steve replied as he hooked his seatbelt on.

They drove off in a hurry, slowing down at every car and motorbike marked with patrol colors. At the same time, in his mother's Pinto, Jonathan was the only one awake next to Dustin who was getting hungry, especially since they had not stopped for lunch yet. Now he was looking for whatever snacks they had left in the car.

"When's lunch?" he asked at last.

"When we find Will," Jonathan replied looking through the rearview mirror. "For now eat the snacks."

And so he did.

When Jonathan turned his eyes back to the road, he saw a thin, feminine figure on the road. He slowed the car to a stop before hitting the brakes once the figure had turned into a little girl—with some short black hair having reached shoulder length, with the same blue jacket and pink frilly dress. The jerk was enough to wake up Mike and Lucas. They looked and they saw her....

Eleven.

"Where have you been this whole time?" asked Mike, being the first thing he said to her.

"And how did you find us?" added Lucas.

The first she said was, of course.

"I was able to find a way out given the number of times I got Eggos and when I sensed Will who was in another laboratory, I thought I could rescue him, then I sensed you and I found you. I would like to help you."

Mike did not know what to say, he just excused himself to let Eleven in, there would be more time for a proper reunion later.

7. A Happy Reunion

It was fortunate that today of all days would be the Fourth of July and as per tradition, a parade was being held down the main street with over five hundred people on opposite sides of the walk watching the floats and performers dancing and waving to crowds that passed by. Almost everyone was there, including Officer Lamb who provided a police escort for the floats, imagining his wife, a cheerleader in her youth as one of the twirlers with her baton, a professional who never dropped it at all.

Seeing the parade in progress up ahead, Joe thought of it as the perfect smokescreen for him and the others to hide Will in from the men.

"Take cover behind that float!" he shouted pointing his right index finger to the flat float with a duo of American flags on top of it.

And so they hid behind it, reckoning without the others who were trying to find Will.

It was Mr. Clarke who found Will first, his car was parked at an intersection, busily tapping his fingers on the steering wheel when he saw Will and some other kids hiding behind the flag float. He rolled down the driver seat window and called out.

"Will! WILL!"

But it was no use over the cheering of the crowd, the music of the brass band and the pretty girls going "Ooooh" and "Aaaaaah" as they twirled their batons into the air. He backed the car and proceeded down the next street in hopes of cutting him off.

At the same time, Eleven, who had finished explaining to Jonathan, Dustin, Lucas and Mike arrived in the town once the parade had reached it's full measure. With the help of Eleven's sensitivity, it was she and Mike who were the third and second to spot Will.

"There he is!" they both pointed out of the window and Jonathan, seeing for himself thought of a way to cut him off.

The last to arrived before Powel and Callahan on their motorbike were Steve, Nancy, Tommy and Carol. All four were watching the parade with anticipation, just waiting for it to end. But Steve was getting bored out of his mind.

"Jesus, these parades are so long."

Then it was Nancy who spotted Will behind the float...and so did the occupants of a white van.

"Aha!" Brenner muttered under his mouth when he saw Will and the kids. But Joe, still determined to be as far away from the men as possible, ran off with the others in tow as Brenner and Lonnie left the van, trying to make their way through the parade. Once a gap in the parade between a '59 Chevy and a large portrait of Abraham Lincoln had formed, Nancy slammed her right foot on the gas pedal and charged after the kids (or at least the direction they took).

Joe and the others dashed into the house just in time to avoid being spotted by the van. Will peeked his eyes out of the window for any sign of the van, until he had spotted Jonathan's Pinto passing. Could it be possible that his brother had been looking for him? And if so, how? The answer to that and many other questions would come later, for his feet were taking him out of the house and onto the road, his arms waving in the air to flag the car to a stop. Jonathan hit the brakes and with shut eyes, he felt the car jerk to a sudden halt. Slowly opening his lids, he noticed Will and blinked three times. It seemed almost unimaginable to think that he was standing right in front of the car, but the others in the car saw him too and before either of them could leave, Jonathan rushed out of the car and ran over to his younger brother, giving him a huge hug.

"Can you believe how worried Mom was when she made that mistake of sending you to that school with Dad?"

"Very," said Will from beneath his brother's shirt.

The brothers released their arms and stared at each other.

"If you want to know where I've been for the past day," he pointed to the house. "It's over there."

Jonathan and the boys introduced himself to Joe and his troupe. After about fourteen minutes, give or take seven, about how Will came to them, it was certain that the time had come to say goodbye.

"I hope we will get to visit you sometime," Joe said as his hug from Will left his body.

"Me too," Will replied.

Dustin broke the silence.

"Shouldn't we get going before those guys come?"

"Be patient," Mike reminded him. "We'll be back home soon enough."

Will gave his final goodbyes to the group and left the house.

"Tell your father I said goodbye," were the last words Will said to Joe before his entire body left the house.

The ride back was long but not in terms of time, for at a gas station outside of town, Jonathan made a phone call to Hawkins, informing his mother and Hopper that they had found Will. He could not imagine Joyce's overjoyed expressions, but her excited voice was just enough to tell Jonathan that she was happy. She and Hopper then informed the others once Powell and Callahan phoned for home and word had soon spread back to Hawkins where the staff of the elementary school greeted Will with a warm welcome (Troy was home-sick with a cold and James was on vacation) and a bit of a small party that took place at the police station. Steve nearly had car trouble from an overheated engine and it took some five hours for Callahan and Powell to retrieve the crop-duster and return home in it. Mr. Clarke was the second to arrive back in Hawkins and his girlfriend was anxious to hear the news about how he had "rescued" Will Byers from a government conspiracy.

But faux tales and rumors aside, everyone was just glad to see that Will had returned. Distracted at first by the lack of cars and plane on the map, one male officer in a grey uniform asked him.

"So what did you do after you broke out?"

"Well, I met these kids who were like part of a indie film group and while they were doing their own movie about me, that was when I saw-Dad?"

His own father was standing before just three seconds before he mentioned his name. His arms were crossed and he was looking like a hunter who come back to reclaim an escaped prize. It was apparent to the crowd parting out of his way that somehow, he got the news.

"Hello, Will," he said in a tone that seemed alien to his ex-wife. "Perhaps I was wrong to trust Brenner, but I assure you that I can find another way to spend more time with you...as a way of making up for everything I have done."

Joyce stepped up, face to face with her husband with the mug of a wild animal contrasting with his smug smile.

"I was wrong to trust you in the beginning. Will is happy here, and if you cannot see it that way, I suggest you fuck off."

The crowd seemed to gasp as Will held back his laughter and quietly left the building through the front door. It might have seemed unlikely to discover that Joe and the kids were standing on the right side of the door, surprising him.

"What are you doing here?"

"In case you forgot," Charles said. "We have a movie to finish."

"When I noticed that," Joe added. "I asked Dad if we could come over and meet the new celebrity, you, to be the main star. So he was happy to book us a train ticket to this town and we started looking for you. We figured you would be here since a lot of people were."

Will could have laughed at that, but chose not to in order to respect the presence of his new friends maturely.

"I'll go ask, Dustin, Lucas, Mike and Eleven if they would be interested too."

And as he ran off happily to tell his friends the news, Will Byers could think of nothing else, but fame, courage and the fact that for

the first time in a year, he was home.

Sorry if I made this potential story such a novella, but I wanted to get this over with to focus on other things.